# 33 Western Road

Exploring Abergavenny

## EXPLORING ABERGAVENNY

For several years the Abergavenny and District Civic Society has been studying the streets, spaces and buildings of Abergavenny and Mardy outside the town centre. This process is known as 'characterisation', defined by the Welsh Government as 'capturing the local distinctiveness by identifying how places have been shaped over time.'

This record of what makes each part of the town distinctive, and often rather special, increases our awareness of the qualities that need to be considered and respected when new development is proposed. We hope that the planning authority will share our impressions and take account of our views. We also hope that our studies will increase residents' understanding and appreciation of their town, encouraging them to take an active interest in how change is managed in the future, or to conduct more research into aspects of the town's development.

The survey started in partnership with the Civic Trust for Wales as a pilot project to test whether community groups could carry out urban characterisation. The outcome was the Trust's *Exploring your town* manual and toolkit (2013). A County Council conservation area appraisal adopted in 2016 has also been taken into account, and this also covers the town's commercial centre[1].

We have divided the town into thirty-six character areas. This report presents the history and character of one of those areas.

Now we would like *your* contribution:

- *Have we made any mistakes?*
- *Can you add to the history of the area?*
- *Do you agree with our impressions of the area?*
- *What have we missed that should have been recorded?*

All the reports are available at https://abercivsoc.com and comments may be sent to abercivsoc@gmail.com or recorded when the reports are exhibited.

1 http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/abergavenny-conservation-area-appraisal

### Acknowledgements and copyright information

The Society is especially grateful for the survey contributions of Clive Bransom, Dick Cole, Tony Konieczny, Nigel Patterson, Anna Petts, Duncan Rogers and Jay Shipley. Dick Cole has carried out much of the research and final report writing, and accepts responsibility for any errors. None of the team had prior experience of heritage studies; all have learned much from the project.

We also thank Anna Lermon and Dr Matthew Griffiths of the Civic Trust for Wales for their early support. Matthew Griffiths, now of the Open University, has also helped to present the project for the education and participation of residents, including the design of these character area reports.

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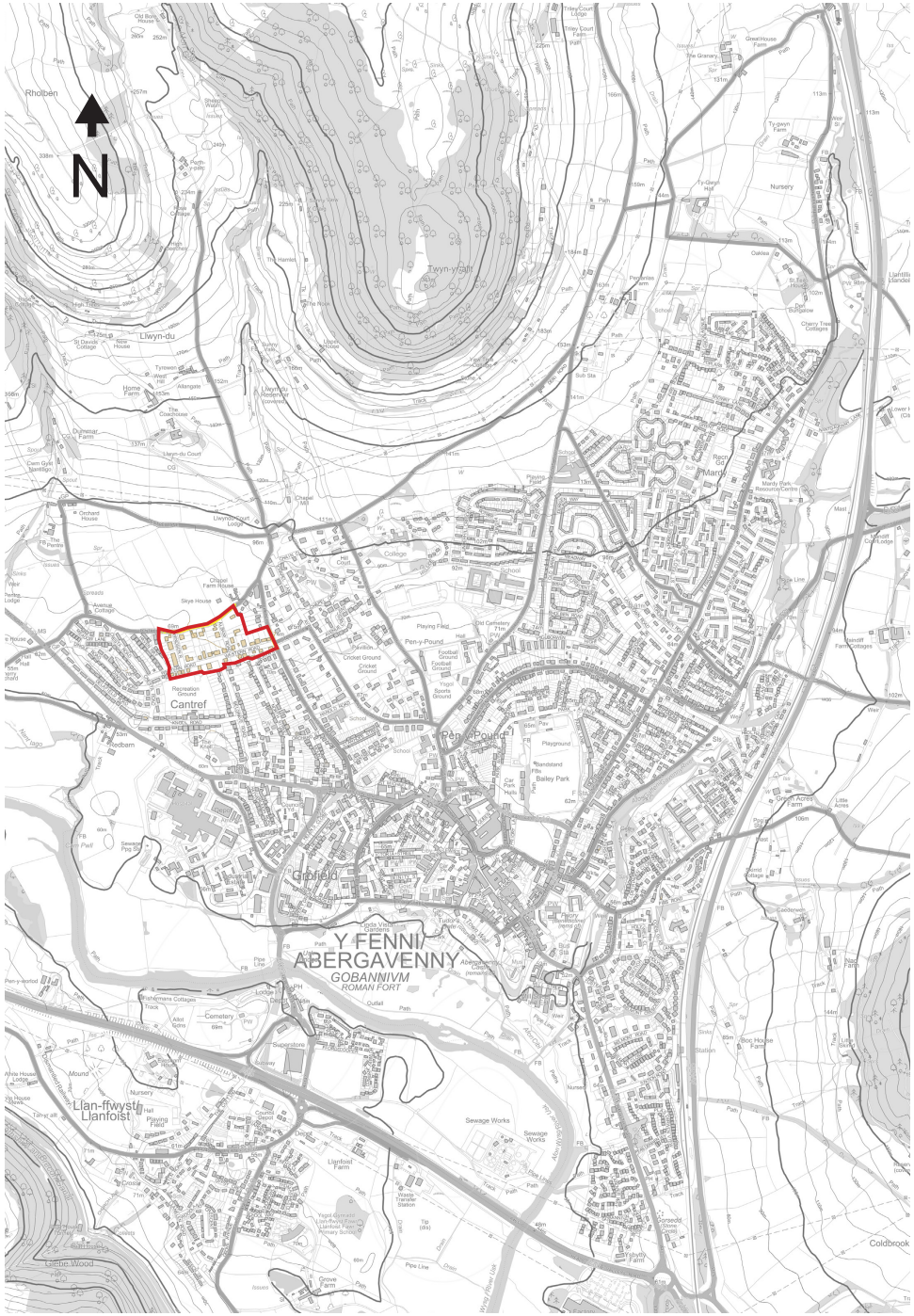
**Cover:** The entry to Western Road

Figure 1: location plan and aerial




## WESTERN ROAD

THE WESTERN ROAD CHARACTER AREA is in the north west of the town and includes almost all of that road together with its side roads, Albany Road and Windsor Road.

This is a little-changed small late-Victorian suburb built solidly in stone for the better-off middle classes, and is still probably the town's first choice for such people who prefer older property. The north side of Western Road and the two side roads are particularly unspoiled. While some pre- and post-war infilling paid no respect to the Victorian character, more recent building, including a number of extensions, has done so.

Figure 2: A recent rebuild

## Historical Background

The area is bounded on the north by an ancient lane, known today as Pentre Road, that makes its way from the Brecon road to the foot of the Deri. We know little about the origins of Western Road except that it was already laid out, with about ten houses built, by the time of the detailed 1881 Ordnance Survey map. Presumably the landowner (the Duke of Beaufort in the 1840s) had decided to offer the land for development in much the same way as land in North Street and Chapel Road was being released a decade or more earlier. The outcome was a rather more prestigious Victorian suburb, particularly so far as properties on the upper side of the road were concerned.

By 1900 Albany and Windsor Roads had been added and the number of residences had reached forty, a rate of development that considerably exceeded that in Avenue Road or nearby North Street and Chapel Road despite these being nearer to the town centre. Only four more houses had been added by 1920 and just six more completed the south side of Western Road by the 1960s. More

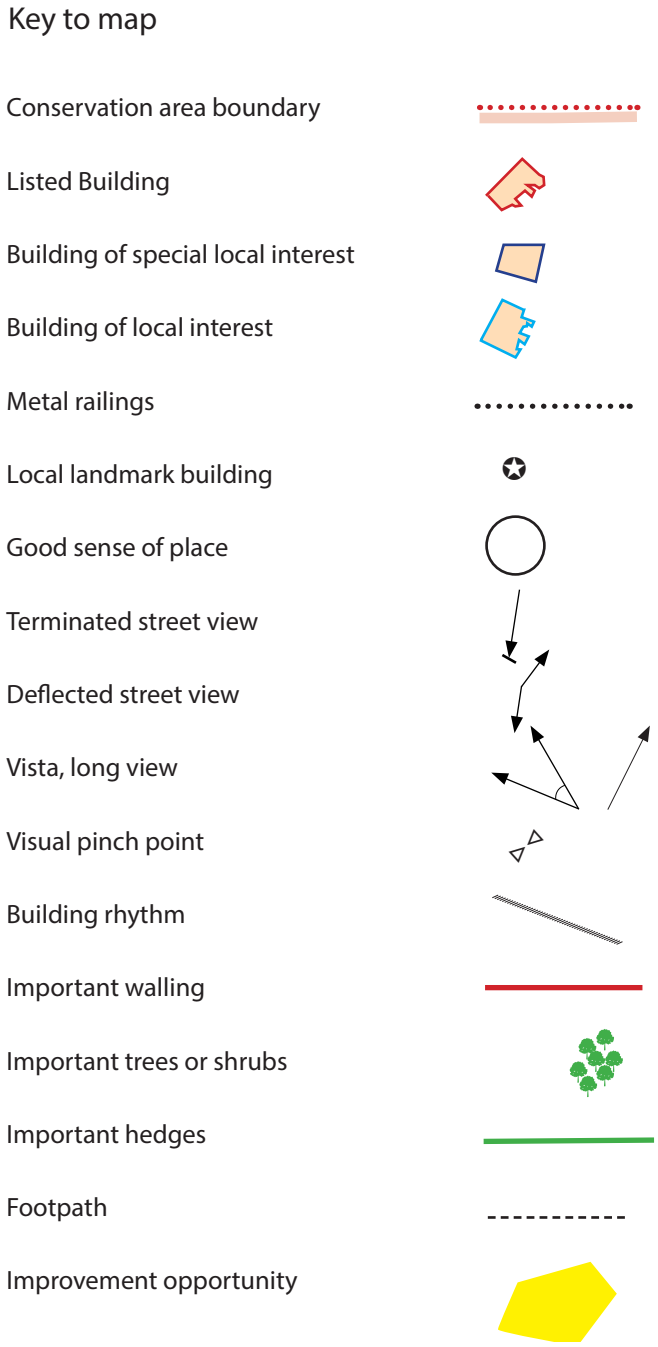



Figure 3: character analysis

recently, two houses have replaced a small nursery garden on Pentre Road and Albany and Windsor Roads have received an extra property each.

## Setting, Streets and Spaces

At its eastern end Western Road is about 75m above sea level. From there it falls gently to the west by about seven metres. The ground rises by a few metres to Pentre Road.

The area is laid out as a small grid with Western Road as the main, rather narrow, access road and Albany and Windsor Roads connecting this with Pentre Road, a lane barely 3m wide. North of Western Road the building line is about 8m from the highway with most plots about 20m wide and rear gardens 25-30m long. On the south side of Western Road space was only available for plots of under 30m depth, so the building line is close to the footway and plots are wider, often more recently infilled. Apart from the terrace on Windsor Road (which has a rear access lane), gardens are wide enough for a driveway and garage.

The area has ample mature trees, many probably as old as the housing. Low stone frontage walls with rounded coping stones are supplemented with hedges and shrubs. Gate pillars have good moulded yellow brick details; some unusual pier finials survive on Windsor Road.

The Blorenge is clearly seen from near the junction of Western Road with Albany Road, but otherwise buildings and vegetation allow mainly glimpses of the surrounding hills from street level.

There is some street parking on Western Road, which carries non-local traffic as it continues west as a secondary access to post-war housing estates.

The area has no open space but Belgrave Park is nearby via Belgrave Road.

## Building Character

*Western Road* No 1 is a quite plain rock-faced stone villa of *ca* 1875 with a shallow hipped roof on four sides, flat on top. No 3 is of a similar age, using a greyer stone, and with quite unusual styling details in limestone, such as a flattened ogee arch to the doorway, patterned stonework over the main windows and vertical slit windows in the twin gables. No 5 is also pre-1880 and has three gables in the roof above two-storey bays and the central doorway, with much white decoration. No 7 is an incongruous 1970s dormer bungalow with reconstituted Cotswold stone, before nos 9-17, a pair in multi-occupation similar to no 1, and no 19, an early 20th-century stone-fronted house with red-brick dressing, much altered around the end of the 20th century. No 21 is a simple pre-1880 sandstone villa with Bath stone dressings and a hipped slate roof. Nos 23/25 are from the last twenty years of that century, with good bargeboards; no 27 is interesting for its mixture of cream and red brick decoration while no 33 uses only cream brick, including string course cogging. Edwardian nos 29/31 Western Road depart from the use of stone, using red brick, roughcast rendering and red tile hanging similarly to properties on Brecon Road. This interesting pair has a stone feature over the front doors at each end, reminiscent of Mackintosh, good windows and a decorative cast iron rain hopper in the valley between the pair.

On the southern side No 6 is a sympathetic plain stone-faced and slate-roofed house of about 1990. No 8 is a strikingly tall 2½ storey pre-1880 house with good decorative bargeboards and interesting eaves brackets, and a later gabled stone porch. Modern no 14 has recently been rebuilt so that a dormer

Figure 4: English Revival and extended Victorian

Figure 5: E.A. Johnson Gothic

bungalow has become a house that is more in keeping with its situation. No 16 is a large pre-1880 stone house with Bath stone dressings and good bargeboards to the gables on the north and west elevations, also a large outbuilding to the rear. Nos 55/57 Belgrave Road form part of the Western Road street scene - a pair of 1930s houses (no 57 extended) in red brick and white rendering with a shared mock timber-framed gable with oriel windows. Nos 24/26 Western Road, well hidden by trees, are post-1880 front-gabled in sandstone with yellow brick details. No 30 is a double-fronted pre-1880 stone house with two-storey bays each topped by slate roofs with finials, and no 34 has cream and red brick decoration. Two modern bungalows then intervene before no 40, with much yellow brick, is the last of the pre-1914 houses on the road.

Several Victorian or Edwardian houses in Western Road have sympathetic modern extensions: nos 23, 27, 35, 34, and 40.

*Albany Road* No 3 is a recent partly stone-faced, slate-roofed house in a Victorian style with a Tuscan-columned doorway portico. All the other houses in the road are late Victorian. Nos 5/7 are a pair of tall steeply gabled late 19th-century sandstone plus Bath stone residences, each with two-storey bays to the front and side and entrances towards the rear. No 11 is also late Victorian in stone with Bath stone details and interesting Arts and Crafts ground floor bays with closely spaced mullions and lean-to slate roofs.

Opposite, Nos 2/4 do not quite match as a pair as no 4 has a two-storey bay and that of no 2 is only a ground floor one; No 4 also has faux timberwork on the bay and a flat-roofed garage. No 6 is large stone house using buff and red brick decoration.

*Windsor Road* This road was also almost entirely completed in the final years of the 19th century. The exception is Manorbier, a recently built house before no 2 that mimics a feature that is particularly characteristic of the road – a projecting mock timber-framed dormer gable in a slate roof. Nos 2 and 12, the end units of a terrace of six, have this English Revival feature, as do each of nos 14-20, in the latter case a half dormer above two-storey bays. Nos 22-26 were built as a single

Figure 6: Tudor Revival – new and old

Figure 7: 'Tudor' gables

house, now subdivided; by E.A. Johnson, It has steep gables and tall chimneys and makes remarkable decorative use of yellow brick. On the opposite side no 1 and no 35 Western Road make a pair similar to nos 3/5 and 7/9, and even the first half of nos 2/4 Albany Road.

Pentre Road has two large recent (one dated 2000) houses that use stone cladding and red brick to harmonise with the area, though with quite different architectural styles.

## Heritage Assets

Surprisingly until recently the conservation Aarea only extended as far as nos 16 and 21 Western Road, but the County Council has now extended it to include all the area, except nos 55/57 Belgrave Road. No buildings in the area are listed but many have considerable architectural interest that should be safeguarded; some may merit listing as good examples of building from the late 19th century.